

Message Text

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ACTION EUR-12

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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R 161637Z AUG 78
FM AMEMBASSY LONDON
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9181
INFO AMEMBASSY BONN
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AMEMBASSY PARIS
USMISSION USNATO
AMCONSUL BELFAST
AMCONSUL EDINBURGH

C O N F I D E N T I A L LONDON 13175

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: PGOV PINT UK
SUBJECT: THORPE REMAINS IN THE RUNNING FOR PARLIAMENT
DESPITE MURDER CHARGE

REF: LONDON 12540

SUMMARY: FORMER LIBERAL PARTY LEADER JEREMY THORPE,
CHARGED ON AUG 4 WITH CONSPIRACY TO MURDER, HAS
CONTINUED TO MAINTAIN HIS INTENTION TO RUN IN THE
EXPECTED OCTOBER GENERAL ELECTIONS, AND HAS SINCE
CARRIED ON, INsofar AS POSSIBLE, WITH HIS NORMAL
POLITICAL AND PRIVATE ACTIVITIES. HIS COLLEAGUES IN
THE PARLIAMENTARY LIBERAL PARTY ARE BITTER AT HIS
REFUSAL TO WITHDRAW, BUT NOW SEEM RESIGNED AND ARE
UNLIKELY TO REFUSE HIM THE PARTY'S ENDORSEMENT, ALTHOUGH
HE MAY LOSE HIS POSITION AS FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN.
PUBLIC REACTION CONTINUES ON BALANCE TO BE SYMPATHETIC
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TO THORPE, WHILE DARK CURRENTS CONTINUE BENEATH THE
SURFACE OF THIS AFFAIR. END SUMMARY.

1. JEREMY THORPE IS PRESENTLY HOLIDAYING IN SWITZER-
LAND, HAVING EARLIER IN THE WEEK ATTENDED THE UN
CONFERENCE ON RACISM IN GENEVA AS A HOUSE GUEST OF THE
BRITISH AMBASSADOR. THORPE HAS IN THE PAST TWO WEEKS

BEEN APPRISED, PRIVATELY AND IN A FEW CASES PUBLICLY, OF THE DESIRE OF HIS PARLIAMENTARY COLLEAGUES THAT HE NOT STAND IN THE EXPECTED OCTOBER GENERAL ELECTIONS. HE HAS TURNED A DEAF EAR AND MAINTAINED HIS INTENTION TO RUN. LIBERAL LEADERS SEEM RESIGNED TO THIS EVENTUALITY, AND PROBABLY WILL NOT FORCE HIM TO RUN AS AN INDEPENDENT, ALTHOUGH HE MAY LOSE HIS POSITION AS THE PARTY'S FOREIGN AFFAIRS SPOKESMAN.

2. INITIAL PUBLIC REACTION TO THORPE'S ARREST HAS BEEN ONE OF GENERAL SYMPATHY. THE MEDIA ARE NOW PRECLUDED BY LAW FROM COMMENTING ON THE CASE. THE CONSERVATIVE PARTY, WHICH WOULD STAND TO GAIN MOST FROM ANY DECLINE IN THE LIBERAL VOTE, HAS TAKEN NO STEPS TO CAPITALIZE ON THE AFFAIR, AND SEEM TO HAVE NO PLANS TO DO SO. THE LIBERALS ARE NEVERTHELESS IN FOR FURTHER EMBARRASSMENT. THE DATE FOR THORPE'S ARRAIGNMENT COINCIDES WITH THE OPENING OF THE ANNUAL LIBERAL PARTY CONFERENCE, WHICH THORPE IS PRESENTLY SCHEDULED TO ADDRESS THE VERY NEXT DAY.

3. IT SEEMS POSSIBLE THAT SYMPATHY FOR THORPE WILL CONTINUE TO COUNTERBALANCE SUSPICIONS THROUGH AN OCTOBER ELECTION. DARKER CURRENTS CONTINUE TO FLOW UNDER THE SURFACE, HOWEVER. SOURCES IN THE PRESS AND LIBERAL PARTY BELIEVE THE CASE AGAINST THORPE IS A CONFIDENTIAL

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STRONG ONE. ONE HIGHLY RESPECTED LONDON JOURNAL RECENTLY RECEIVED INFORMATION, FROM A HIGHLY RELIABLE SOURCE IN A POSITION TO POSSESS SUCH FACTS, SUGGESTING THAT THE REASON HAROLD WILSON, WHILE STILL PRIME MINISTER, ROSE TO DEFEND THORPE IN 1976 WAS THAT MI5 (THE BRITISH INTERNAL SECURITY SERVICE) MONEY HAD BEEN USED TO PAY BLACKMAIL TO SCOTT ON BEHALF OF THORPE. THE JOURNAL IN QUESTION REFRAINED FROM PRINTING THIS STORY BECAUSE OF THE POTENTIAL LEGAL CONSEQUENCES, AS IT HAS SIMILARLY REFRAINED FROM PRINTING WHAT INFORMATION IT HAS REGARDING THORPE'S CONNECTION WITH THE ALLEGED ATTEMPT ON SCOTT'S LIFE.

BREWSTER

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